"The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel." (Mark 1:15).

"Jesus said, 'I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never go hungry, and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty." (John 6:35).

"Seek the Lord while he may be found; call upon him while he is near, let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; let him return to the Lord, that he may have compassion on him, and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon." (Isaiah 55:6-7).

Our topic of study for this paper is the Reformed understanding of the doctrine of conversion. The word "conversion" means "turning." In the context of this paper, we refer to spiritual turning, which entails turning away from sin to the Lord Jesus Christ. In biblical language, this "**turning from sin** is called repentance, while **turning to Christ** is called faith. Faith and repentance are sometimes referred to as "twin sisters." This is because, in the act of true conversion, both faith and repentance are always present. One cannot occur without the other. As John Colquhoun wrote speaking of both faith and repentance, "He gives these two graces together and at once in respect of time; and therefore, in our conception of them, they are to be distinguished, yet they are never separated."[1] The message of the cross of Christ is "**repent and believe** in the gospel." (Mark 1:15). There is no biblical basis for thinking you can savingly believe in Christ dying for your sins while not turning from sin[2]. The objective of our study is to answer two fundamental questions: What is saving faith, and what is true repentance, as defined by Scripture? Answering these questions will help us understand what conversion entails.

This study continues a series of investigations into the application of redemption that Christians receive through their Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. The first study in this series is titled "A Study on God's Electing Grace," followed by the second study titled "A Study on God's Call in Salvation." This is followed by a third study titled "A Study of God's Work in Regeneration. "[3] The current study explores the act of a sinner's conversion and builds upon prior studies mentioned. All previous studies provide a list, often referred to in Reformed theology as the "order of salvation."[4] This list serves as a framework within theology, outlining a

[1] John Colquhoun, *Repentance* (The Banner of Truth Trust: Edinburgh, 2010), 127
[2] This does NOT mean all your sins will immediately go away! Post conversion there will be a growing desire to avoid sin and even hate sin. This is part of a believer's progressive sanctification.
[3] All three prior studies can be found here: https://reedrusniak.academia.edu/research#papers

[4] The Latin term, *ordo salutis*, (Order of Salvation), was in prominent usage during the Protestant Reformation.

logical sequence of events through which God applies the benefits of Christ's redemption to His people. It is essential to note that this logical sequence is viewed from a human perspective. As time-bound individuals, we perceive these truths as a sequential process. The eternal God, who knows the end from the beginning, has no limitations regarding time or sequence! The current study intends to consider the fourth event. For your reference, the complete list of the "order of salvation" is provided below.

1) Election refers to God's choice of people to be saved.
2) The Gospel Call (God calling sinners out of darkness).
3) Regeneration (being born again).
4) **Conversion (faith and repentance).**
5) Justification (right legal standing).
6) Adoption (membership in God's family).
7) Sanctification (proper conduct of life).
8) Perseverance (remaining a Christian).
9) Glorification - Death (going to be with Christ).

In our previous study on regeneration, we learned that a person who has experienced regeneration, synonymously referred to as "born again," is entirely passive in this experience. Regeneration is a one-time work of God the Holy Spirit. Also noted in that study is the analogy of wind that Jesus used when discussing this topic with the religious leader, Nicodemus. We do not know where the wind comes from or where it goes; it is the same for everyone who is born again by the Holy Spirit. It is not the same in a person's conversion. In faith and repentance, humanity has an active role to play. The individual who has been born again is the one who believes and repents! Wayne Grudem's definition of conversion highlights this truth. He writes, "Conversion is our willing response to the gospel call, in which we sincerely repent of sins and place our trust in Christ for salvation."[5] We are no longer passive. The Holy Spirit, in His powerful work of regeneration, has enabled us to trust in Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of our sins. John Murray writes, "Regeneration is the act of God and of God alone. But faith is not the act of God; it is not

[5] Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1993) 709

God who believes in Christ for salvation, it is the sinner. It is by God's grace that a person is able to believe, but faith is an activity on the part of the person and of him alone."[6]

Our first objective is to answer the crucial question: What is saving faith? Let's start our discussion by defining what saving faith is not. Biblical saving faith involves more than just knowledge about Jesus' death on the cross. Countless individuals in our world have heard or read that Jesus Christ was crucified in the first century on a wooden cross in Jerusalem. Many have been told that He died for their sins and that believing in Him is essential for obtaining eternal life. Many have been told that Jesus arose from the grave and appeared before hundreds of people before He ascended to heaven. While all this is true, unfortunately, numerous people who know these truths remain lost in their sins and, unless they are genuinely born again, will face God's judgment. The letter of James teaches us that demons possess knowledge. James writes, "You believe that God is one; you do well. Even the demons believe and shudder." (James 2:19). We can conclude, then, that while knowledge of Christ and His works is essential, it is clear that mere knowledge alone does not grant someone eternal life.

In addition to simply knowing facts about Christ, we can also say that agreeing with or approving of the life of Christ and His works is not, in itself, saving faith. Yes, of course, to be a Christian, you must agree with the Word of God. There are numerous examples in the Bible of people who accepted God's Word but were still not believers in Christ. One example we can mention is Nicodemus in John 3. Nicodemus said to Jesus, "Rabbi, we know that you are a teacher who has come from God, for no one can do these signs that you do unless God is with him." (John 3:2). Although this was true, at this point in Nicodemus' life we have no reason to think he was a Christian. He approved of Jesus, but saving faith is more than approval. In Wayne Grudem's chapter on faith in his Systematic Theology work, he mentions another example of a person who believed in what Scripture said but still lacked saving faith. Grudem writes, "King Agrippa provides another example of knowledge and approval without having saving faith. Paul realized that King Agrippa knew and apparently viewed with approval the Jewish Scriptures (what we now call the Old Testament). When Paul was on trial before Agrippa, he said to King Agrippa, 'Do you believe the prophets?' I know that *you believe*." (Acts 26:27).[7] Yet King Agrippa did not have saving faith. We know this because the King told us so! He said to Paul, "In a short time, you think

[6] John Murray, *Redemption Accomplished and Applied* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1980) 106
[7] Grudem, Systematic Theology, 710

to make me a Christian!" (Acts 26:28). In summary, simply possessing knowledge of Christ and affirming His truth does not equate to saving faith.

Along with knowledge and affirming God's truth, saving faith also involves trust. Grudem's definition is helpful. He writes, "Saving faith is trust in Jesus Christ as a living person for the forgiveness of sins and eternal life with God."[8] What is important to notice in this definition is that it emphasizes personal trust in Jesus Christ. There is a commitment one makes to have Christ as your Lord and Savior! In the words of John Murray, "Faith is a whole-souled movement of self-commitment to Christ for salvation from sin and its consequences."[9] Saving faith accepts God's truth, the gospel, and clings to it wholeheartedly!

With saving faith, there is a conviction that the work of Christ on the cross is sufficient for the needs of one's soul. This faith holds that there is no other way to attain salvation and no other means of escaping condemnation due to sin. It reflects on what Scripture teaches about Jesus. It believes that "there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved." (Acts 4:12). The person with saving faith hears, through the Scriptures, the voice of Jesus when He says, "whoever comes to me I will never drive away." (John 6:37). The writer to the Hebrews links this conviction to his definition of faith. In Hebrews 11:1, he writes, "Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the ***conviction*** of things not seen."

Professor John Murray, in his invaluable writing on saving faith, discusses the idea that all people have a warrant to come to Christ. This is because the Gospel of Jesus Christ extends to every man, woman, and child and says, "Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." (Matthew 11:28). What a tremendous blessing! God, in His mercy, love, and grace, does not discriminate among people but invites everyone, through the Gospel message, to believe in His Son! Murray writes, "The faith of which we are now speaking is not the belief that we have been saved but trust in Christ so that we may be saved."[10] In one of our previous studies, we examined the biblical truth of God's electing grace. This refers to the planning of the triune God, who, before the foundations of the world, appointed some to eternal life. It is crucial to recognize that the invitation of the Gospel to come to Jesus Christ is not restricted to the elect! The offer of the Gospel is also not limited to those for whom Christ died on the cross! That has been

[8] Grudem, Systematic Theology, 710
[9] Murray, *Redemption Accomplished and Applied,*107
[10] Ibid., 109

decided within God's sovereign and eternal will. The good news of salvation is to be proclaimed to all people! The Church of Christ has been commanded by their Lord and Savior to, "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit." (Matthew 11:19). This mission can only be achieved by proclaiming Christ to all people.

Along with saving faith, the Bible teaches us that conversion requires repentance, which is the act of turning away from sin. As mentioned at the beginning of this study, faith signifies turning to Christ, while repentance means turning away from sin. Murray offers a helpful description of how faith and repentance work together. He writes, "The faith that is unto salvation is a penitent faith and the repentance that is unto life is a believing repentance."[11] How should we define biblical repentance? In the Westminster Shorter Catechism, question number 83 asks and answers the following: Question: "What is repentance unto life?" Answer: "Repentance unto life is a saving grace, whereby a sinner, out of a true sense of his sin, and apprehension of the mercy of God in Christ, doth, with grief and hatred of his sin, **turn from it unto God**, with full purpose of, and endeavor after, new obedience." What a minute! Don't I repent? Why does the catechism "teach repentance unto life is a saving grace." Dear friend, it is all by grace! Even believing and repenting is by the grace of God! Were it not for God's grace, none of us would have saving faith or repentance! Thankfully, our great Lord and Savior Jesus Christ is "full of grace and truth" (John 1:17).

It is inevitable that if you are in Christ, you will face specific sins you must contend with. This applies not only to Christians but also to anyone who, by God's grace, recognizes they are a sinner and understands the need to turn to Christ. The Puritan writers of the 17th century referred to these as "darling sins." Turning away from these "darling sins" is a good indicator that the Holy Spirit is at work in a person's heart. This was true for the believers who lived in the ancient Greek city of Thessalonica. Their particular sin was idolatry! They lived in a culture in which idolatry was rampant! This sin is what kept them from turning to the true God. Paul, in writing to them, commends them for their repentance. He writes, "For they themselves report concerning us the kind of reception we had among you, and **how you turned to God from idols** to serve the living and true God, and to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead, Jesus who delivers us from the wrath to come." (1 Thessalonians 1:9-10). This is true repentance that

[11] Murray, *Redemption Accomplished and Applied,*113

demonstrates saving faith! Dear Reader, may I ask what your “darling sins" are? What sins are you clinging to and unwilling to let go of? In most cultures today, we don’t see much worship of false images and statues. However, idolatry takes many other forms and is just as rampant today as it was in the first century. Wealth, beauty, pride, envy, lust, drugs, alcohol, and a multitude of other sins become idols in our hearts!

Biblical repentance encompasses the mind (a specific intellectual component of knowledge of sin), emotions (feelings of grief and hatred for sin), and will (turning from sin to God and resolving to live in obedience to Christ). In other words, repentance involves every aspect of our being! Murray provides us with helpful guidance. He writes, “Repentance we must not think of as consisting merely in a change of mind in general; it is very particular and concrete. And since it is a change of mind with reference to sin, it is a change of mind with reference to particular sins, sins in all the particularity and individuality which belong to *our* sins. The test of repentance is the genuineness and resoluteness of our repentance in respect to our own sins, sins characterized by the aggravations which are peculiar to our own selves.”[12] It is essential to understand that feeling remorse for your sins is not sufficient in itself for repentance. A classic and tragic example of this is the betrayal of Christ. If anyone knew Jesus intimately, it was Judas Iscariot. He was one of the original twelve apostles. Judas betrayed Jesus to the Sanhedrin in the Garden of Gethsemane in exchange for thirty pieces of silver by kissing him on the cheek and addressing him as "master." The Scripture tells us that after Judas betrayed Jesus, he was filled with remorse over what he had done. He was sorrowful for his sin! However, we have no evidence of repentance! The Bible tells us Judas went out and killed himself! The point in all of this is not that we will not feel sorry for sin. Of course, there is genuine sorrow in repentance. However, there is a sorrow that leads to true repentance and a sorrow that does not. The Apostle Paul states it like this: “For godly grief produces a repentance that leads to salvation without regret, whereas worldly grief produces death.” (2 Corinthians 7:10).

A helpful way to illustrate saving faith and genuine repentance is through various accounts in the Gospel records. We will conclude our study by examining four biblical accounts that exemplify both saving faith and repentance leading to life. The biblical parables and accounts are found in Luke’s Gospel and will illustrate the essential components of conversion we have discussed. We will consider Luke 23:39-43, which describes the thief on the cross, followed by

[12] Murray, *Redemption Accomplished and Applied,*114,115

the account of the Pharisee and the tax collector in Luke 18:9-14. Next, we will review the account of Zacchaeus and his encounter with Jesus in Luke 19:1-10, and finally, the story of the Prodigal Son in Luke 15:11-32.

Our first example is that of the penitent thief on the cross in the Gospel according to Luke, serving as a valuable illustration of both saving faith and genuine repentance. In this brief encounter with the Savior, the thief confesses his sin, acknowledges Jesus' innocence and kingship, and trusts in Jesus for mercy and grace. As a result, the thief receives the promise of eternal life from Christ Himself. Here is Luke's account:

"The criminals who were hanged railed at him, saying, "Are you not the Christ? Save yourself and us!" But the other rebuked him, saying, "Do you not fear God, since you are under the same sentence of condemnation? And we indeed justly, for we are receiving the due reward of our deeds; but this man has done nothing wrong." And he said, "Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom." And he said to him, "Truly, I say to you, today you will be with me in paradise." (Luke 23:39-43). What constitutes the evidence of true repentance and saving faith in this passage of God's Word? First of all, how did the thief repent? Let me remind you what repentance entails. As mentioned earlier, biblical repentance encompasses the **mind** (a specific intellectual component of knowledge of sin), **emotions** (feelings of grief and hatred for sin), and **will** (turning from sin to God and resolving to live in obedience to Christ).

The dying repentant thief acknowledges that his actions in life were wrong. Intellectually, he understood and confessed that he was a guilty sinner deserving of punishment. He said, "**We are receiving the due reward of our deeds**." Acknowledging his guilt and sinful heart, he turns to Christ! By doing so, he demonstrates both repentance and faith! He says, "**Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom**." In this, he expresses belief that Jesus is the Messiah, who will reign after death. By asking Christ to remember him, he demonstrates trust in Jesus' power to save him. In his very limited encounter with Christ, we can see the utilization of his mind, emotions, and will. We can see that his belief is more than just intellectual. His faith is more than just an acknowledgement. The result of his repentance and faith was to hear the blessed words of Jesus, "**Truly I say to you, today you be with me in Paradise**" (Luke 23:43). What a gracious Savior the Lord Jesus is! All who come to Him with a sincere, repentant heart will find Him willing and ready to grant eternal life. Finding mercy and grace with Jesus was true for a dying criminal. Friend, is it true of you?

Another example of faith and repentance is found in the parable Jesus told about the Pharisee and the tax collector in the Gospel of Luke. He writes,

"He also told this parable to some who trusted in themselves that they were righteous and treated others with contempt: "Two men went up into the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. The Pharisee, standing by himself, prayed thus: 'God, I thank you that I am not like other men, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even like this tax collector. I fast twice a week; I give tithes of all that I get.' But the tax collector, standing far off, would not even lift up his eyes to heaven but beat his breast, saying, 'God, be merciful to me, a sinner!' I tell you, this man went down to his house justified, rather than the other. For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, but the one who humbles himself will be exalted" (Luke 18:9-14).

In this account, notice the tax collector's posture and attitude. He stands far off, does not even lift his eyes to heaven, and beats his breast. In the culture of Jesus' day, beating the breast was a common indicator of sorrow and a desire to be repentant. Unlike the Pharisee, who is proud of his own good works, the tax collector demonstrates true faith by asking God to be merciful to him and acknowledging that he is a sinner in need of mercy. This illustrates that he understands deep down that he cannot save himself. We observe humility and sorrow that accompany true repentance. The Pharisee, on the other hand, is filled with self-importance due to his inflated ego, based on his perceived understanding of God. He relied on himself and the works he deemed sufficient to stand before God, rather than depending on God's mercy or grace. The tax collector's prayer is an expression of faith: he appeals to God's mercy, placing his trust not in his own actions but in God's grace for forgiveness. His trust rests solely on God's nature, not on his worthiness.

In summary, the parable of the Pharisee and Tax Collector from the Gospel of Luke reveals that true repentance is a humble acknowledgment of sin, and true faith is trust in God's mercy. It is these qualities, not self-righteousness, that lead to justification before God. Relying on God for justification is the essence of true faith. Justification, defined as a legal standing before God, will be the subject of the next study in this series on the order of salvation.

Another account of Christ's life that helps us understand the elements of conversion is the transformation of a wee little man named Zacchaeus. This account is found in Luke's Gospel, chapter 19. It reads,

"He entered Jericho and was passing through. And behold, there was a man named Zacchaeus. He was a chief tax collector and was rich. And he was seeking to see who Jesus was, but on account of the crowd, he could not, because he was small in stature. So, he ran on ahead and climbed up into a sycamore tree to see him, for he was about to pass that way. And when Jesus came to the place, he looked up and said to him, "Zacchaeus, hurry and come down, for I must stay at your house today." So, he hurried and came down and received him joyfully. And when they saw it, they all grumbled, "He has gone in to be the guest of a man who is a sinner." And

Zacchaeus stood and said to the Lord, "Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor. And if I have defrauded anyone of anything, I restore it fourfold." And Jesus said to him, "Today salvation has come to this house, since he also is a son of Abraham. For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost." (Luke 19:1-10).

In first-century Judea, the job of a tax collector was notorious for corruption. Tax collectors were known to line their own pockets by collecting more taxes than necessary. As a result, these tax collectors were hated by many and considered what might be called today a "lowlife." It was for such people as Zacchaeus, the chief tax collector, that the Savior of sinners came into the world to save. Elements of faith and repentance are central themes in this passage. Luke describes Zacchaeus as a wealthy chief tax collector who has a strong desire to see the Lord Jesus. In saving faith, there is a yearning to know the Lord Jesus Christ.

In many of the Gospel accounts, the recipients of salvation faced numerous obstacles to overcome. Oftentimes, Jesus would finish an encounter with the words "go in peace, your faith has saved you." One example is the blind beggar Bartimaeus. The complete account can be found in Mark 10:46-52. What I would like to highlight regarding the nature of true faith is that in the account, Bartimaeus was sitting on the side of the road and knew Jesus was coming. Mark tells us he cried out, "Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!" We are told that the surrounding people kept telling Bartimaeus to be quiet. Mark tells us they "rebuked him." However, this did not deter the blind man. Mark tells us he "cried out all the more, Son of David, have mercy on me!" The Lord Jesus stopped and miraculously healed the man, telling him, "your faith has made you well."

The point is that true faith looks beyond circumstances! True faith always comes to Jesus to find rest for the soul! Many other examples could be given, but like blind Bartimaeus, who was given his sight, Zacchaeus also had his obstacles. Yet this did not deter him either. In his case, climbing the sycamore tree was his solution. This was done with no regard for his social status. Zacchaeus was adamant about seeing Christ. This demonstrates a genuine desire to know Christ, reflecting a heart open to faith. What about you? What are your obstacles that perhaps are preventing you from becoming a Christian? I pray that they would not deter you from knowing the Savior!

In addition to overcoming obstacles, we see Zacchaeus making a public declaration. He addresses Jesus as "Lord." This indicates a recognition of Christ's authority and a willingness to submit to Him. Zacchaeus demonstrates repentance in his pledge to give half of his possessions to

the poor and to repay fourfold anyone he has cheated! His actions show that he is genuinely sorry for his sins and sincerely committed to changing his behavior. This illustrates what godly repentance is like. Jesus responds that "Today salvation has come to this house, since he also is a son of Abraham. For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost." (Luke 19:9-10). To conclude this example, the life-changing encounter Zacchaeus had that day with Jesus was far more than a moral lesson. The encounter should be viewed as a narrative of conversion. His faith is evident in his pursuit and reception of Jesus, while his repentance is demonstrated by his radical generosity and restitution.

Before we conclude our study, we will examine one final example: the parable of the Prodigal Son.[13] This passage stands as one of the clearest representations of biblical faith and repentance found in Scripture. It is one of the longer parables that Jesus told. I have included only part of the parable below, specifically the interaction between the youngest son and his father. This section presents the essential components of conversion that will help us understand biblical faith and repentance. Please read Luke 15:11-24, which is provided below:

"And he said, "There was a man who had two sons. And the younger of them said to his father, 'Father, give me the share of property that is coming to me.' And he divided his property between them. Not many days later, the younger son gathered all he had and took a journey into a distant country, where he squandered his property through reckless living. And when he had spent everything, a severe famine arose in that country, and he began to be in need. So, he went and hired himself out to one of the citizens of that country, who sent him into his fields to feed pigs. And he was longing to be fed with the pods that the pigs ate, and no one gave him anything. "But when he came to himself, he said, 'How many of my father's hired servants have more than enough bread, but I perish here with hunger! I will arise and go to my father, and I will say to him, "Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son. Treat me as one of your hired servants."' And he arose and came to his father. But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and felt compassion and ran and embraced him and kissed him. And the son said to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son.' But the father said to his servants, "Bring quickly the best robe, and put it on him, and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet. And bring the fattened calf and kill it, and let us eat and celebrate. For this, my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found.' And they began to celebrate."

This section of the Gospel according to Luke has served as a great aid and blessing to Christians throughout the centuries. In it, we see the "Father" (God) very receptive to the repentant

[13] The description "Prodigal Son" is not used in the early Greek manuscripts of Luke. It is said to have originated in the 4th century Vulgate. This was a translation of the Scriptures in Latin.

son. If you are reading this text and have fallen away from your relationship with the Lord, please know God is the same today as in this wonderful parable. God loves the sinner who turns to him in faith and repentance. Let's start by identifying the various elements in conversion. We can begin with the younger son's recognition of sin and his need. At long last, this wayward son finally came to his senses and saw how far he had fallen in his relationship with his loving Father. He had squandered all of his inheritance money on the world's temporary pleasures of sin. Finally, however, he recognized his sad condition. We could say the self-awareness of his condition was the first step toward repentance. So many in our world who claim to be Christians, and so many who do not claim that title, are caught up in the same darkness that the younger son experienced. The world, the sinful flesh, and the devil have enslaved them so that they are spiritually blind!

Once the son recognized the terrible condition he was in, he finally reached a point where he wanted to confess his guilt and humble himself. He determines to go back home and say, "Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son." Dear Reader, it is essential that when we turn away from sin in repentance, we are willing to accept the responsibility for the mess we have made of our lives! We don't blame others! No, we humbly acknowledge before God, and sometimes man, that we have grievously sinned against them. Repentance is much more than just regretting what we have done! It is by God's grace to confess it, to hate it, and to turn away from it. Like the prodigal, we leave behind the old life and seek the help and restoration of God in the new life. The son had no visions of entitlement! Quite the opposite! He sought mercy and grace from his Father.

We also notice elements of faith in this parable. While the son was living his reckless life, he still trusted in his Father's character. The decision he made to return home exemplifies his faith and trust in God. I believe that Psalm 84:10 expresses the thoughts of the younger son, who was fed up with the world and its pleasures. "For a day in your courts is better than a thousand elsewhere. I would rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God than dwell in the tents of wickedness." The son did not return, expecting to be welcomed! He came back humbled and would have been happy just to be one of his Father's servants. At this point in faith and repentance, he would prefer to be a "doorkeeper" at his father's house than to join the evil activities he had participated in before.

Finally, we must admire the grace of his father! The prodigal relied on his Father's love and forgiveness. There was no merit to be claimed! Quite the contrary; he was a broken man with

a deep need! His loving father could not wait to see him. When he knew the son was on his way back home, the Father ran out to meet him! What an outstanding example Jesus has given to us of the Heavenly Father!

Could you tell me this? Do you know true faith and repentance? Have you trusted in the Lord Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your guilt and shame? Do you know the great love of God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit? One God revealed to us in His Holy Word as three persons. My friend, these are matters of life and death! The Lord Jesus loves and receives sinners. It is why He came into this world of darkness. The Scripture says, "If you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For with the heart, one believes and is justified, and with the mouth one confesses and is saved. For the Scripture says, "Everyone who believes in him will not be put to shame." (Romans 9:9-11). If you have not experienced God's grace in conversion, I urge you, my friend, to repent and believe in Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins.

Just as I am, without one plea,
but that thy blood was shed for me,
and that thou bid me come to thee
O Lamb of God, I come.

Just as I am, and waiting not
to rid my soul of one dark blot,
to thee, whose blood can cleanse each spot,
O Lamb of God, I come, I come.

Just as I am, though tossed about
with many a conflict, many a doubt,
fightings and fears within, without,
O Lamb of God, I come, I come.

Just as I am, thou will receive,
will welcome, pardon, cleanse, receive;
because thy promise I believe,
O Lamb of God, I come, I come.

Author: Charlotte Elliot, 1836